

# The Classical Bulletin

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No. 1

## Language In General

NORMAN J. DEWITT  
Washington University

The teacher of Latin can perform a valuable service by arousing the student's interest in language: not necessarily "General Language" as a formal subject, but rather, language in general. This interest can be encouraged by casual researches inserted as a diverting part of the regular program.

For one thing, after the student has passed the preliminary stages he should be advised that the meanings given in the vocabulary are suggestions rather than prescriptions. The adjective *miser* provides material for a brief demonstration. The usual vocabulary meaning in this case is 'unhappy, wretched.' The student quite reasonably translates *misera puella* as 'wretched girl,' *miser poeta* as 'unhappy poet,' and so on throughout the exercise. But if we were using everyday and not vocabulary English, we should probably say 'poor girl' and 'poor poet,' because *miser* represents an expression of sympathy. On the other hand, if we are to translate 'poor' into Latin, we must determine whether it is an expression of sympathy or an indication that the poet or the girl is financially embarrassed.

Continuing with our vocabulary, we note that the meaning of *iubeo* is 'I order.' The literal-minded student will translate it in every instance as a form of the verb 'to order,' although *Iussi eum abire* in the language of Plautus would certainly mean "I told him to go away." It is a reasonable inference, therefore, that *iubeo* may mean 'I tell,' and in fact it has this milder force of the command more often than not.

In Terence, incidentally, we find the phrase *Iube istaec auferri*, which in the spoken idiom may be translated "Have that stuff taken away." Thus, in addition to relating *iubeo* in an imperative form to English 'have,' we have suggested that *fero* means 'I take.' This suggests in turn that the vocabulary meaning of *porto* is inadequate. Every student will translate *Milites frumentum in castra portaverunt* quite faithfully, "The soldiers carried the grain into the camp," but, of course, this places undue emphasis on the method of transportation, and in a normal situation in English most of us would say that the soldiers took the grain into the camp. In other words, *porto* may mean 'I take,' although 'take' in English may have a variety of translations into Latin, of which *capio*, the vocabulary translation, is only one.

Here we may note that the vocabulary says that *duco* means 'I lead.' In certain instances, however, *duco* must be translated 'take.' Thus in Catullus X we read:

Varus me meus ad suos amores  
Visum duxerat e foro otiosum . . .

If we translate this "My friend Varus, finding me in the Forum with nothing to do, had led me . . .," we in-

trude an implication that does not appear in the Latin, namely, that Catullus was blind, reluctant, or intoxicated, whereas "My friend Varus . . . had taken me to see his girl-friend . . ." is about what Catullus had in mind.

This is all very confusing, not to say stupefying, but it involves the old Socratic principle that confusion, administered in properly graduated doses, is an aid in arriving at understanding. What we should understand is that 'means' does not always mean what we think it means. If the elusive meaning of meaning is understood, it becomes clear that the alleged difficulty of Latin lies to a great degree, not in Latin, but in language itself, the first and most important subject of true education.

Let us return to our meanings. When we say that *iubeo* and *duco* mean 'I tell' and 'I take' in spite of what the vocabulary says, we are making progress toward an understanding of how language works. We naturally assume that *means* is the same as *equals* (=) in the sense of a mathematical equation. Thus, when we say that *equus* means 'horse,' we think that it is the same as saying *equus* = 'horse' just as we might say  $a = b$ . But the formula for translation, if we are to find an analogy in mathematics, is closer to the old axiom that things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. In this particular case, *equus* and 'horse' are two different names for the same thing, and the equation *equus* = 'horse' is therefore workable though misleading, while the equation *duco* = 'I lead' is only partly workable because the act and its figurative extensions, of which *duco* is the name or symbol, are not adequately named or symbolized by the English 'I lead.'

The principle that words are names or symbols is, of course, fundamental in the study of language. The proper use of these symbols, and the relation between the name of a thing and the thing itself, are the prime objects of language study. They are best explored through the study of two languages, and for this purpose English and Latin taken together have no equal. As generally understood, of course, the study of languages and how they work is the study of grammar. But the term 'grammar,' in view of what we have been saying thus far, needs additional definition.

There are two kinds of grammar. The traditional grammar, such as we associate with the study of Latin, and such as we usually associate with the study of English, is prescriptive grammar, that is, it prescribes how we ought to write, and is based on the accepted norm of the best usage of the language involved. One characteristic of prescriptive grammar, as we understand it, is a kind of rigid logic that is implicit in a large number of rules (to which there often appears to be an equally large number of exceptions). This logic is derived largely from the way in which the Latin language works,

because formal classical Latin (as against colloquial Latin) is one of the most logical and consistent of all languages. This same logic has been applied to the English language, not with complete success, because the logic of the English language diverges in many respects from that of formal classical Latin, and the English language is changing rapidly, despite prescriptive grammar.

Of course, prescriptive grammar is very important. If we master it, we should be able to write correctly in reasonably good style. But there are many linguistic problems or situations which it does not take into account, and it has little to do with the real essence of language: that is, the relation between symbols (words) and the things to which they refer, along with the logic which produces meaning through combinations of symbols. For a complete understanding of language, we need descriptive grammar in addition to prescriptive grammar.

The teacher of Latin need not become involved in these abstruse matters of language logic beyond pointing out that English and Latin do not necessarily work in the same way. For example, we have certain action-names in English that have extended their range of use so widely that they are no longer names of one or two actions, but of so many that it is hardly possible to speak of 'meaning' at all, unless we add something to the verb by way of clarification. We have seen that 'take' may be represented in Latin by *fero*, *porto*, and *duco*, in addition to *capio*, depending on the circumstances. As a demonstration of the variability of meaning in English, we might ask an advanced class to translate the following sentences into Latin, avoiding the use of *capio* wherever possible:

(1) I took pains to finish the work. (2) I took the book from the table. (3) I took down what he said. (4) Caesar took the town by storm. (5) The enemy was taken by surprise. (6) I took my friend home. (7) It took ten days to build the road. (8) We were taken in by his plan. (9) I took the books home. (10) We were very much taken by his manner and his appearance. (11) The young man has very taking ways. (12) He took his departure. (13) I take it you're a good student. (14) Take care. (15) Take your time. (16) Two dollars were taken from my purse. (17) He took the news badly. (18) I am taken sick. (19) I take two magazines. (20) I took him at his word. (21) I took him to task. (22) I take off my hat to you. (23) The birds took flight. (24) The aeroplane takes off. (25) We took up a collection. (26) I'll take you up on that. (27) He takes Latin lessons. (28) I'm taking up Latin. (29) The young man was taken down a peg. (30) The boy takes after his father. (31) The father takes after the boy with a switch. (For other uses of 'take,' see any large English dictionary.)

The purist will perhaps object that some of the phrases cited are of dubious respectability. But the compleat grammarian cannot neglect any phenomena, and of course it is on the borderline of respectability in colloquial speech that the most significant phenomena occur, in Latin as well as in English. The varying uses of 'take' listed above (and there are many more) embody one of the fundamental principles of Basic English, namely, that an enormous range of meaning is made possible by the use of certain common verbs (take, go, get, make, etc.) plus a 'directive.' Colloquial English, that is, the actual living language, is uniquely rich in these 'operators' or verbs which have a narrow meaning by themselves but are capable of astonishing semantic extension when used in various combinations. Latin, on

the other hand, is poor in these verbs, and for this (and for various other reasons, including the existence of gender and a great number of inflections) it would scarcely be possible to construct a 'Basic' Latin along the same lines as Basic English.<sup>1</sup>

However, there are certain verbs in Latin which may be regarded profitably in the light of what we have said about the English 'operators.' For example, the student is usually told that *peto* means 'seek,' as in *pacem peto*. He will then be confronted with such phrases as *Peregrini Romam petunt*, *Hostes ducem nostrum gladiis petierunt*, *Quid petunt?* etc., in which it is apparent that *peto* cannot conveniently be explained on the basis of a single meaning—or at least not on the basis of any one symbol available in the English language. In other words, *peto* is not completely significant until we consider it as part of a semantic complex, and it is only the complex, not *peto* by itself, that has a translatable meaning.

By this time it will perhaps have occurred to the reader that *mitto* in its compound forms is the most variable of the common Latin verbs. As most teachers are aware, the compounds of *mitto* are quite unsatisfactory in the study and explanation of Latin directional prefixes. It is all very well with *voco*: *revoco*—'call back,' *convoco*—'call together,' *evoco*—'call out,' *provoco*—'call forth,' but the compounds of *mitto* simply do not lend themselves to separation into the simple meaning 'send' plus a direction-prefix meaning. The explanation of *proelium committo*, *capillis demissis*, *brevi tempore intermisso*, *submitto*, etc., on the basis of simple meaning 'send' plus direction-prefix, frequently borders on the fantastic. But, of course, it is as useless to look for a translatable meaning for *mitto* in compounds, using one English symbol, as it would be to attempt to use *capio* in the translation of the thirty-one phrases involving 'take' which we listed above.

To be sure, the teacher of Latin is a very busy person. In these days of casual education, it is frequently his or her pleasure to inform the adolescent for the first time of the existence of the traditional rules of prescriptive grammar, knowledge of which is still an essential part of the art of writing. And it may be the teacher's duty to impart a little of the historical perspective and 'the habitual vision of greatness' which the student may otherwise never acquire. But the strength of the Classics lies in the fact that not only their essential but also their auxiliary material is of almost unlimited value and richness. The teacher of Latin, by virtue of his training and his calling, has an initial advantage in the study of language in general, and through this study he may well enrich his teaching to the profit of his students. The few points raised in this paper may be regarded as a prospectus of what may be found in the new and widening approach to the study of language and grammar.

<sup>1</sup> Most proposals for 'Basic' vocabularies in languages other than English are based on frequency tables, i.e., on the words of most common occurrence. But the Basic English vocabulary, as its proponents are at some pains to insist, is based not on frequency but on efficiency or semantic versatility, and is a recognition of the unique grammar of the English language. Unlike most other languages, English has practically no inflections, it has abandoned gender, and possesses verbs like 'make,' 'take,' and 'get,' which have a tremendous range of significant use.

# The First Business of the Classical Teacher<sup>1</sup>

By E. K. RAND

Harvard University

In general I do not believe that classical teachers in the schools are to blame for the condition of the classics. Of course, the ancient authors are related to our day in many ways, and the skillful teacher should suggest this fact from time to time. It is his first business, however, to teach the elements of Greek and Latin and the art of reading at sight simple Greek and Latin prose. I heartily disapprove the present tendency to give a fictitious interest to elementary school textbooks in Greek and Latin by equipping them with sensational illustrations which often are sentimental and misleading. A teacher should make just Greek and Latin interesting, since interesting they are. They should be presented with authority as vital things for learners, whether the learners like them or not. One day they will find out.

The real blame attaches to the colleges that have given up the requirement of Greek and Latin for the A.B. degree. Harvard, I am glad to say, still holds firm to the Latin requirement. In the face of the questionable educational experiments that are flooding our country today, classical teachers, I believe, should simply insist that Greek and Latin are in themselves among the best subjects for the training of young minds, and that the avenues opened by Greek and Latin grammar conduct to those pleasant fields in which true culture dwells. In a word, students of the classics were accurately described by old Ausonius centuries ago as those who were bound to "pluck the sweet flower of the bitter root":

*capturi dulcem fructum radice amarae.*

The trend of modern educational theory, it seems to me, is to encourage in young breasts the idea that they can pick the flowers that grow from no roots at all.

Of course, we classical teachers may have a chance now and then to address a larger audience than our classroom. On such occasions we should not, I believe, present apologies or defences for the ancients. They need none. They can speak for themselves if we only allow them. An attitude of defence arouses one of combat on the other side. We should rather appear as those who possess some good thing which we should like to share with others. On the other hand, our attitude toward the "educational" follies of the day should be unremittingly aggressive. We should fight to have Greek and Latin prescribed—not for all, of course, but for those who are prepared for the higher study of Arts and Letters. We should insist that there is such a thing as intellectual training and that Greek and Latin are important means of securing it. We can tell the public that the ancients offer us a royal robe of learning, fine in texture and lasting—not the "Ersatz" suits of blotting paper that theorists are contriving today. Nor should we worry about the twilight of the classics in a world devoted to natural science and sociology. The best representatives of these vital interests of the human mind are well aware of the treasures of antiquity. If we continue to keep open the avenues that lead to these, there will sooner or later be a new turn in their direction. For the culture of the ancients is too good to be permanently lost.

<sup>1</sup> Reprint from THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN, St. Louis University, October, 1937.

## Sophocles and Agatha Christie

By P. A. SULLIVAN, S.J.

Weston College

At first glance a comparison of Sophocles, the Greek dramatist, and Agatha Christie, the well-known detective-story writer, will appear to be as startling as a Chestertonian paradox. Of course, it is true that a drama and a detective story have nothing in common. But Sophocles and Agatha Christie have something in common if both of them are considered as detective-story writers.

In a previous issue of THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN it was pointed out how *Oedipus Tyrannus* had all the characteristics of a good detective story.<sup>1</sup> Oedipus himself is the detective and the murderer. He picks his way through clew after clew until he finds himself face to face with a most horrifying revelation. The detective Oedipus discovers that he himself is the murderer of his own father.

It is an interesting point that Agatha Christie has struck the same note in one of her stories that caused so much comment a few years ago. In her *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* this modern authoress presents to us a plot in which the detective Dr. Sheppard is at the same time the murderer.

There are, however, several differences in the development of the two plots, that concretely exemplify the two distinct techniques of the ancient and modern writers. In *Oedipus* the detective is not aware that he is the murderer. In fact, he is completely stunned when the revelation explodes in his face. However, the audience right from the very beginning of the play is perfectly aware that Oedipus is the guilty man. Their interest is not in the unexpected revelation of the murderer's identity, but in the method by which Oedipus little by little realizes the awful truth.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the detective Dr. Sheppard, alone knows that he himself is the guilty one; but (and this is the important point) the reader does not even suspect it. The final revelation is a complete surprise.

These two stories, then, are but concrete examples of the modern and the Greek plot development. The Greeks avoid the element of surprise. The moderns place much emphasis on it. A careful comparison of these two stories may well bring out the distinction between the two methods and show the advantages and disadvantages of each. Would the *Oedipus* be a more interesting story if Oedipus knew of his guilt and the audience did not? Would Agatha Christie have sold even more copies of her book had she used the Greek method? This is a very concrete and vivid way of bringing home to the class the two types of plot development.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. XIX, p. 19, "The First Detective Story."

An early settlement with our subscription department would be greatly appreciated. Also, please, recommend THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN to others interested in classical study and teaching.



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Vol. XXI OCTOBER, 1944 No. 1

## Editorial

We are happy to open the twenty-first volume of this BULLETIN with what may be called a Language Number. Language is the classical teacher's daily food.

One of the troublemakers in the Latin classroom is the vocabulary. Looked at casually and from a distance, the list of words is not the most attractive feature of the Latin Book. There is nothing on the surface to inspire enthusiasm in either teacher or learner. The one or at most two 'meanings' attached to each entry have, apparently, no secrets to give away. The Latin dictionary, to be sure, is more generous in helping the student to ferret out the real 'meaning' of a Latin sentence; yet even the dictionary does not always take him to the fountains of simple, everyday English in which to express the Latin writer's thought. In the end, it is the business of the wide-awake teacher to make so 'dry' a thing as the study of words an interesting, vital, humanizing exercise. Words in a 'list' have one 'meaning'; words in given contextual settings may 'mean' a dozen different things. Professor DeWitt's engaging chat on Language in General, printed in this issue, will, among other things, show how the teacher can make the acquisition of the daily 'vocabulary' an interesting game instead of a drudgery.

Language is the great door to culture.<sup>1</sup> To open it or to keep it shut is in the teacher's power. This shows, once again, that the case for or against Latin is largely in the hands of the Latin teacher. The classics will 'mean' to our students what the teacher makes them 'mean' to them.

<sup>1</sup> See *Language and Linguistic Method*, by S. S. Laurie (Edinburgh: James Thin; 1893).

Professor Westington's paper in this issue will, we trust, induce our readers to examine a booklet entitled "Language Teaching in Wisconsin Public High Schools." We were under the vague impression that the present

war had stimulated the study of foreign languages, and perhaps it did; but it is certainly disillusioning to learn from the Wisconsin official report that only "13 per cent of the public high schools were studying foreign languages early in 1942—a percentage which strikes the author himself as being inordinately low in a state which offers such unusual advantages for language study." On the other hand, it is a comfort to learn that in the Wisconsin high schools Latin enjoys a relative popularity: "Not only does Latin stand first in point of enrollment, but the number of pupils studying Latin is greater than that studying all the other languages combined." In its concluding chapter, this report presents a brief discussion of the decline in language study, shows what administrators and teachers can do to promote foreign-language study, and stresses the compelling need for such study both now and in the post-war world.

What the post-war world will look like is beyond prediction. Will the rush for *modern* foreign languages, stimulated by a desire to use the knowledge merely in the interests of American trade and business, crowd out Latin? Will the newly-awakened interest in the technical sciences completely overshadow all desire for culture? And, not to forget what is most important, are we classical teachers going to desert our post and fall victims to defeatism now so rampant in American classical education? "The progress and success of classical studies in the post-war world depends upon *our capacity*, first to realize, and then to convey to our students, the significance of the great books of Greece and Rome in such a way that their import may be a real power in forming *completely integrated personalities*."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From a forthcoming paper by Edward G. Callahan, S.J., "The Sense of Tradition in Classical Education."

Professor A. M. Withers, a teacher of English, is known to our readers as a fearless champion of the classics. He is impressive in his insistence, among other things, that the classics departments and the departments of English and modern languages should support each other as parts of one strongly united humanistic whole, instead of functioning as wholly separate entities.<sup>1</sup>

Our readers will, we trust, catch the spirit of Dr. Withers' paper in this issue, "Contra Defeatism." To illustrate his statement that "all students of English whose goal is distinction must have some direct taste of the classics in the original," we call attention to Dr. Frank Pierce Jones's instructive paper in *Classical Weekly* for May 15, entitled "Anthony Trollope and the Classics."

<sup>1</sup> See THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN, Vol. XX, p. 45, "Professional Unity."

## Languages and Mathematics

At least two foreign-language colleagues of my acquaintance are teaching Physics in the present emergency, and the supposition seems logical that there are many more such cases, for the mathematical and the language disciplines have much in common from the intellectual point of view. I was myself at one time in-

structor in mathematics in the Georgia School of Technology, and observed that most of my colleagues in the department were by no means indifferent to, or uncultivated in, languages and literatures. And throughout my career as graduate student and teacher of Romance Languages I have found that the mathematics men and women are generally of a type not to be thrown into a mystic haze by an occasional word longer than the average. To make a long story short, the mathematically and linguistically trained are (and of right ought to be) "brothers under the skin."—A. M. Withers, "An Open Letter to Teachers of Mathematics," *The Mathematics Teacher*, May, 1944.

#### Catholic Classical Association of Greater New York

At the final meeting of the Association (April 22, 1944) the following officers were elected for the coming year: President, Rev. Joseph M.-F. Marique, S.J., Fordham University; Vice-President, Rev. James Nolan, Cardinal Hayes High School; Secretary-Treasurer, Genevieve McGovern Sullivan.

In a challenging address, "The Teaching of Greek in High Schools and Colleges," Rev. Patrick O'Leary, S.C., Dean of Don Bosco College, Newton, N. J., reiterated the necessity for the return to the study of the Greek language not only as one of the best intellectual exercises but for its inherent beauty, harmony, and simplicity.

The following papers should be of special interest to students of *Koine* Greek:

"Give Place to the Wrath," (*Rom. 12:19*), by Edgar S. Smothers, S.J., in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, April, 1944;

*Ibid.*, July, 1944: "Axios in the Gospels," by James A. Kleist, S.J.

ΑΡΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ (*Mk. 1:1*), by Allen Wikgren, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. LXI, Part I, 1942.

"An Important Principle in Rendering the Gospels into Modern English," by James A. Kleist, S.J., in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, June, 1944.

#### Language Teaching In Wisconsin Public High Schools

BY MARS M. WESTINGTON

Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana

Teachers of foreign languages and other proponents of this branch of study will welcome the publication of a seventy-eight page booklet entitled "Language Teaching in Wisconsin Public High Schools." This bulletin was prepared by Frank J. Klier of the Wisconsin High School at Madison with the full cooperation of the State Department of Public Instruction and is issued by John Callahan, Superintendent of Education for the State of Wisconsin. It presents in concentrated form the results of a state-wide survey of the foreign-language situation in this State as it existed in January 1942.

In a letter to the reviewer, Mr. Callahan makes this pertinent observation:

This language study is the first complete survey of its kind in Wisconsin. Aside from filling a need in curricular information, the booklet is very timely, for languages are expected to assume an increasingly important role in the post-war world. The intensive language training program now conducted for military personnel at many institutions in the United States does more than demonstrate the global character of the conflict. It shows the need for a much firmer foundation and knowledge of foreign tongues and thought to the effect that America may intelligently play her proper role in the shaping of the peace-time world.

The value of the report is enhanced by the fact that it is based on a questionnaire sent to all foreign-language teachers in the public high schools of Wisconsin and answered by 100% of the recipients.

As indicated by the author in the 'Foreword,' the survey was made "primarily for the benefit of principals and teachers, in order to fill a gap in curricular information; to facilitate planning; to stimulate interest in language study, and to guide future teachers" (p. 5).

The results of Mr. Klier's research are presented in nine chapters embracing such topics as the enrollment in languages; the attitude of parents and pupils toward high-school language programs; the preparation, teaching load, tenure, and salaries of language teachers; the objectives in language study as well as aids and methods in teaching; the importance of languages in war and peace. Five tabular lists indicate the enrollment and percentages, by grades and by size of school, for the six foreign languages taught in Wisconsin's public high schools—Latin, German, Spanish, French, Polish, and Italian. Helpful summaries are conveniently provided throughout the pamphlet. The report's well documented text is supplemented by two appendices. One of these presents the questionnaire employed in this survey; the other contains a partial list of references.

The study of enrollment in languages shows that the situation in Wisconsin is not dissimilar to that of other states. The number of students in third and fourth year is woefully small; most of the schools offer only two years of simultaneous language instruction; in the case of smaller schools the language courses are alternated—a practice which the author rightly condemns as 'educationally not advisable' (p. 10, fn.). Mr. Klier feels that the wartime high-school program with its emphasis on the timely and immediately practical will make inroads on the enrollment in the first two years and still further reduce the number taking the third- and fourth-year courses. We know that this has happened elsewhere during the last two years.

A perusal of Tables I-V shows that 13 per cent of the public high school students were studying foreign languages early in 1942—a percentage which strikes the author himself as being inordinately low in a state which offers such unusual advantages for language study.

The popularity of the various languages is reflected in the following ranking: Latin, German, Spanish, French, Polish, Italian. Not only does Latin stand first in point of enrollment, but the number of pupils studying Latin is greater than that studying all the other languages combined.

The survey shows that language study in Wisconsin enjoys a higher degree of popularity among girls than among boys, and that Latin is decidedly a girls' language, appealing, as it evidently does, to almost twice

as many girls as boys. Only in German and Spanish is the sex distribution about equal.

An analysis of the language offerings shows that the one-language school systems constitute 62 per cent of all the language systems. Latin is taught in five times as many systems as its runner-up, German. Even in some of the larger centers Latin is the only foreign language offered. In the two-language school systems the German-Latin combination occurs most frequently with French-Latin running a close second. Only the very large school systems teach four languages. The simultaneous offering of five languages is extremely rare. The city of Milwaukee alone gives instruction in six languages. In January 1942 language study was available in 59.25 per cent of all school systems of the State.

Only 13 per cent of the language schools require language study for college entrance, work in 'specialized fields,' and for language majors. An additional five per cent encourage this branch of study for college entrance. In other words, only 18 per cent of Wisconsin's public high schools seem to have "evinced active interest toward the subject" (p. 22).

In an effort to discover the principal factors determining the trend of language enrollment, the author is led to the conclusion that these are "the influence of home, community, and school on the one hand and, in contrast, the influence of other languages" (p. 30).

Women far outnumber the men as language teachers, the ratio being as high as 8 to 1. Complete returns from 496 teachers show that language teaching is most frequently combined with English (46.0 per cent), social studies ranking second (18.0 per cent).

The survey also reveals that teachers of Latin show the highest median mark in years of service (6.0) and made the lowest per cent of changes in subjects (5).

The concluding chapter presents a brief discussion of the causes of the decline in language study, shows what administrators and teachers can do to promote foreign-language study and stresses the compelling need for such study both now and in the post-war world.

A digest of something which is in itself a digest must necessarily be compendious. For this reason the reviewer recommends a diligent study of this carefully prepared report. Statistics usually make dry fodder, except perhaps at election time. The material in this pamphlet, however, if not literally edible, is extremely readable. The bulletin is significant as indicating curricular trends in language at a very critical period and, as State Superintendent Callahan has pointed out, the data compiled by Mr. Klier are "so pertinent and so complete that they must be regarded as basic to any broad and realistic plans for immediate or post-war foreign language instruction in our high schools" (p. 3). It is to be hoped that Mr. Klier's study will inspire educators in other states to undertake a similar project.

This seems to be the problem—to make boys and girls like their Latin so much that they could not be persuaded to shelve it when schooldays are over.—*Willis A. Ellis.*

Greek, sir, is like fine lace; every man gets as much of it as he can.—*Dr. Johnson.*

### Contra Defeatism

By A. M. WITHERS

Concord College, Athens, W. Va.

A certain prominent classics scholar, retired, asserted not long ago in an essay that "less than five per cent of the students who begin Latin in school carry it to the point where it can be used as a key to unlock the treasure house"; and employed this fact, if it is such, to prove that the teaching of Latin in the high schools may be restricted to a mere handful without perceptibly altering the course of American education. He said nothing about the conditions under which Latin has to struggle, or of the possibility of their improvement.

And yet it is well known that the Latin front has been so continuously 'under-prestaged' during the past many years that most of the young have come to lose inherited faith in it. And even those who kept inherited faith found the curriculum so cluttered with new things, to say nothing of those sterling guarantors of 'citizenship' and 'leadership,' the 'activities,' that even when, under worried parental pressure, they took Latin in the high school, they found it there often quite denatured, and thus largely denuded of its intellectual values.

Some one has said that our American educational affairs are shot through with appeasement; and that is true. Wasting intercollegiate athletics, fraternity, sorority, and other 'social club' 'agitations,' overmuch dancing and other forms of passing the time pleasantly away, are offered to students who would otherwise turn up their spoiled patrician or plebeian noses at colleges and universities dependent upon their patronage. Expectations of their devotion to study are correspondingly and obligingly reduced. The extra-curricular 'spectacularities' are represented to their receptive spirits as half or more of the mission of institutions of 'learning.' The student phrase 'polishing the apple,' though uttered jokingly, is so persistent that it must have behind it a mountain of general belief that professors can be influenced by other considerations than mere correct deportment and attention to duty.

But it will surprise many that friends of the humanities of the stature of the scholar in question are ready to adopt, consciously or unconsciously, the appeasement line. He probably does not know that even members of college faculties say 'for he and I,' 'sosology,' and 'tremendous'; that precious few of our college students apprehend 'apprehension.' Recently I sought student conceptions of 'reactionary government,' and here was a response only a little less than typical: "I should think that a reactionary government is one which sees both ways and gives the people the chance to react to things in the way they choose in other words democracy not dictatorship." (The punctuation is not mine).

Appeasement of those responsible in large measure for the present unsatisfactory status of English is implicit in the essayist's suggestion that the contributions of Latin to the vocabulary of modern vernaculars can be "exhibited more thoroughly and more expeditiously than by the usual method." He means, I assume, that courses in word study will varnish durable coats of acceptable language capacity and feeling upon our representative citizenry. The dictionary publishers especially would



like us to believe this. But the idea is false, and dangerously insidious, because, while the contrary cannot be palpably proved, the affirmative doctrine is suited exactly to the minds and palates of those who do not know by personal experience that good language has to be absorbed, has to be grown up with, and that there is no experience in this matter that can at all compare with the wide-ranging linguistic ruminations which genuine contacts in our formative period of life with Latin (or Greek) translation provide. The modern foreign languages, entered upon by students uninformed in English, cannot serve here. The immediate objectives in the study of these languages are too various. And besides, students, parents, educational 'experts' and 'guides' all join in demanding an early—if not instantaneous—outcome in speaking ability in them, an attitude discouraging to the leisurely processes needed for basic upbuilding of language philosophy, word-stock, and word-consciousness. Hamstringing to these processes is the counsel to let down the bars of 'perfectionism' for the greater number, the countenancing of something less than the best as their guiding star. That by the methods of veneering in the modern foreign languages, implicit in such an attitude of appeasement and defeatism, we can gain "widespread access to the minds of contemporary peoples" is hardly logical in view of the fact that it is just such permitted superficiality that is the thing most powerful in keeping us away from the better minds of our foreign contemporaries.

In discussing specifically the role of teachers of English in keeping alive the spirit of the 'intangible values,' our 'honorable opponent' (in our own ranks) does not foresee irreparable harm for our language and literature in the limitation of the classics to an élite 'tenth.' But if the graduate professors of English may presume to inclusion among the humanistic elect, it is not easy to see how it is possible to set aside their collective opinion on this score, namely, that all students of English whose goal is distinction must have some direct taste of the classics in the original.

To continue to provide facilities in the classics for 'the fortunate few,' "lest the springs dry up," is not only not sufficient but also not feasible. Suppose we strictly limit the number in the classics enclosure, say, in the year 1945. Surely then we shall have to jettison a goodly part of the present cargo of instructors of Latin and Greek. Out of the 'fortunate few' of 1945 a still fewer 'few' will carry on in 1946. And with each successive year a cumulative loneliness will creep into the ranks more and more oppressively, and the supply of classics students and teachers will diminish until the last devoted remnants have no one to instruct them, and "the springs dry up" indeed and in truth.

Furthermore, it may legitimately be asked who is, at the outset, to help the individual to make the decision on whether or not to seek the wisdom and the disciplines of the classics. Such determination and jurisdiction (given vision) involve much too large responsibility for the teachers in high schools, and no other group or combination of groups is in sight for the selection purpose. Shall we not, in this connection, recall that stanza of Gray's *Elegy* which begins: "Full many a gem of purest ray serene;" and that verse about the forgotten heart, "pregnant with celestial fire"?

Here, too, we may introduce the reminder that it is not necessary to be able to write essays in Latin, or to speak it like a Roman, in order to experience a large part of its benefits. And, at all events, it is a mistake, often made by those who have reached distinguished prominence 'the hard way,' to indulge a rising generation by willingness to feed them on softened intellectual food, after the fashion of parents who would spare their offspring the hard knocks of existence. Latin is indeed complicated, but, as regards sufficient non-professional attainment in it, is not beyond the capacities of intelligent youth, who must represent far more than a tenth of our student population. It is not a 'long way around,' but rather an actual short-cut to knowledge of several languages, including our own. There is no space here to attempt to prove this assertion. To many, indeed, it cannot be proved. But the safest course for the planners of linguistic education is surely to accept the nearest approach to a voice of authority which we have upon this matter, the already mentioned judgment of the body of graduate professors of English.

If 'tares' must be sown in the field of the classics, it is devoutly to be hoped that the sowing will at least not be done by the classics' best friends and exponents. The latter should be well above envisaging permanent changes after this or any other war turning mankind into a species of creature never known before. There is no excuse for panic haste to throw overboard age-old principles. Defeatism is not in order on the classics front.

### Semi-Annual Report of The Institute for Classical Studies

Harvard University  
January 1 to June 30, 1944

During the half year covered by this report, the staff of the Institute for Classical Studies, which had been reduced during the previous half year when Messrs. Callahan, Anastos, and Alexander had to give up their work for the Institute for the duration of the war, suffered another loss when Professor Ernst Kapp had to cease working for the Institute for the time being. He is teaching at present in the Classical Department of Columbia University, and has been unable to contribute to our programme. On the other hand, Professor Edmund Berry, in the Classical Department of the University of Manitoba, Canada, a former student of the undersigned, expressed his wish to join the group of those who are working for the edition of Gregory of Nyssa, and has made his first contribution. Toward the end of June, Mr. James Walsh, of the Harvard Graduate School, Classical Department, took up work for the Institute. He is going to continue it during the second half year and will act as research assistant. Fr. Anselm Strittmatter, O.S.B., of Brookland, Washington, D. C., has definitely joined our staff and will start collating manuscripts for an edition of the *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* in July.

During the first half year of 1944, Mrs. Virginia Woods-Callahan has collated Codex Vaticanus graecus 449. Her collation of the two treatises *De Oratione Dominica* and *De Beatitudinibus* is near completion. She

has not been able to give the work for the Institute much time during this period but she expects to concentrate on the edition of these two works in the second half year, and to be able to give it much more time in consequence of a new arrangement with the Institute. Mr. John P. Cooke of Chicago checked collations made by other members of the Institute of the following works of Gregory of Nyssa: Cod. Oxon. Barocc. 27, ff. 174r-204r (*De Oratione Dominica*), ff. 125v-174r (*De Beatitudinibus*); Paris. gr. 584, ff. 42r-64r (*De Oratione Dominica*), and ff. 7r-32r (*De Beatitudinibus*); British Museum Old Royal 16. D.I, ff. 429r-479r (*De Oratione Dominica* and *De Beatitudinibus*); Venetus Marc. gr. LXVII, ff. 162r-172r (*De Beatitudinibus*); Vaticanus gr. 1907, ff. 186v-195r (*De Beatitudinibus*). Mr. Cooke collated himself Cod. Vaticanus gr. 1907, ff. 195r-201v (*De Oratione Dominica*) and ff. 145v-157r (*In Ecclesiasten*). Mr. Walter Solmitz collated Cod. Mus. Brit. Old Royal 16.D.I for *In Sanctum Stephanum* (end), *In Sanctam Placillam*, and *In Ascensionem* (beginning). He checked a few collations of Mr. Berry's for *De Vita Sanctae Macrinae*. Mr. Edmund Berry collated the *Vita Sanctae Macrinae* in Cod. Vaticanus gr. 446. Mr. James Walsh has started a collation of Gregory's *Oratio de Deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*.

At the end of the last report of the Institute, it was said that new plans were made for the extension of the available manuscript material, insofar as this seems to be possible during the present phase of the war. With the valuable assistance of the U. S. Embassy in Madrid it has been possible to order a large amount of photostatic reproductions of manuscripts of Gregory in the Escorial and some Spanish libraries in Madrid. The Institute has not received this material as yet, but according to a letter of Mr. van Horn, Attaché of the section of the Embassy for cultural matters, he has succeeded in securing the material for the Institute and it is under way at present. The undersigned wants to express his sincere gratitude for this great service rendered to our task by this gentleman, who had to go to the trouble of identifying the present location and signature of various manuscripts which had changed their name and place since the printed catalogues were published. I also want to thank Fr. Anselm Strittmatter for his active assistance in this connection. The occupation of Sicily, South Italy, and Rome seems to open up the prospect of securing new material for our edition from the libraries of those parts of Italy from which we were cut off for years by the war.

PROFESSOR WERNER JAEGER

Cambridge, Mass.  
1 July 1944

There does not seem to me to be any doubt but that a mind that can enjoy itself with lovely things *because they are lovely* is a cultured mind. There almost has to be that fine leisure, *quam minimum credula postero*, if there is to be the soul-ennobling, soul-filling thing called culture. And you have neither lovely things nor leisure in the purpose of the modern educator with his great frenzy for efficiency and accuracy and speed and 'quantity production.' Horace knew nothing of quantity production when he advised Leuconoe to wis-

dom! Nor was he simply pot-valiant, nor merely a dilettante. He was talking of the heart of happiness, as the poor human heart can snatch at happiness in the bustle and clang of rushing 'civilization.'—R. B. Morrison, S.J., *C. B.*, XVIII, 33.

The classics are vital to a nation at any time; they are supremely vital to a nation in a time of crisis.

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